

14 JAN 1969

STATEMENT OF LCDR GALBRAITH FROM VA-145
OPS DUTY OFFICER LOG.

0820

Explosions were such that they shook entire island and shattered one window in ~~pry~~-fly. The pressure waves were more pronounced than the noise. Fire spread across the stern and forward to #3 and #4 with such speed that all were stunned. Explosions on fantail caused large chunks of debris to fly clear above ~~pry~~-^{fly} ~~flight~~ tower and forward of island.

~~0820~~ - BACK TO START

~~0820~~ - F-4 on port quarter exploded, fire quickly spread to adjacent aircraft with smoke and fire covering entire stern area. Men and equipment turned to and there were several in the fire area when first ordnance went off. Men were blown about the deck but recovered ~~and~~ ^{and} continued fighting. Immediate action taken by air-boss to direct and control fire parties. The fire spread to aircraft adjacent to #4 elevator and all the way across the starboard side. Ordnance continued to blow men and equipment from scene but they continually returned to equipment. Hose team leaders and catanult, ~~and~~ flight deck, and handling officers lead teams as men fell all around from blast ~~and~~ ^{and} shrapnel. Fire got worse as the entire fan tail was engulfed and ordnance continually exploded. Destroyers ROGERS and STODDART came along side to assist but had little effect. They could ~~not~~ ^{SCARCELY} reach flight deck with water pressure. ~~THEIR EFFORTS MAY HAVE SAVED HANGAR DECK BY #4 ELEVATOR FROM FURTHER FIRE.~~
Hose pressure inadequate. ~~Too many fire hoses used on bow. Fire crews PRESSURE ON BOW HOSES ROBBED THOSE AFT.~~
took hoses and ^{had} to step over bodies, some on fire, in their path. Men rolled shipmates over and over to put fires out, ~~and in at least one case, rolled one of the ONE FIRE INTO ANOTHER AND BOTH WERE LOST~~
~~both were lost.~~ This was on center line ~~beam~~ ^{JUST AFT} of #4 elevator.

0900 - Fire appeared from pry-fly to be under control. Hose pressure better aft. Long hose team organized aft and area has been cleared by blast or pushing air craft over the side.

SHIPS

Helo is searching the ^{area} aft in water after bringing one load of survivors aboard.

0910 - Fire team^d still have plenty of hair as they fight amidst exploding rockets and live mark ~~82~~ ⁸² bombs on starboard quarter. They walk through shipmates blood to move hoses ~~forward~~ ^{aft}. Charred bodies recovered and moved forward by stretcher teams. Captain ordered no more planes to be pushed over the side. Large fire starboard, aft of island, just now under control. Large hole in flight deck by LSO platform being served with much fog foam and water. Aircraft ~~hulls~~ ^{hulls}, wings, tails, and engines lying about charred flight deck. Hose teams fighting small magnesium fires over entire aft deck area.

0925 - Destroyer 876 moving from port quarter aft. Mickey Mouse head sets absolutely invaluable on flight deck for communication to ~~prx~~-fly.

0930 - Request from flight deck to push aircraft over the side. Air boss went to commanding officer for clearance to push over fan-tail. Air ^{EVAC} ~~V~~ Helo reported in route to Enterprize. Bow OK to recover helos.

0940 - Medics pick up bodies ~~which~~ which is nothing more than collection of fire proof clothing aft of island.

0950 - Small fires reported on 02 and 03 levels aft. They are being brought under control as they occur. Air Boss and Assistant have good control of flight deck throughout fantastically fast moving situation. They meet each situation as it occurs.

0955 - Handling Officer reports F-4 starting ~~fire~~ ^{FIRE} was being serviced by compressor and that it started drop tank on fire.

MANY more CAUSES SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED.

1000 - Coast Guard Helo aboard for three stretcher cases and two walkers, ^{THE FIRST TO EVACUATE}
C-130 also in area for search. Hundreds of men on after deck in well organized hose teams. Small smoke sources are all that's left. Twenty millimeter ammo adrift being thrown over by EOD teams.

~~Twenty minutes, aircraft being thrown over by EOB Teams.~~

1005 - Aircraft loss count begun. Most efforts in pry-fly directed to control and coordination of air evac aircraft. Loss count 8 - F-4's, 6 - A-7's, 1 - A-3. I count 81 men on ^{one} hose team ~~and~~ Medics and blankets appearing on deck in good effort. I see 1 F-4 Hulks across fan-tail, 1 A-3 with engines and wing only is on aft edge of #1 elevator. One F-4 and one A-7 lying on ~~their~~ sides forward of #1 elevator. Pieces of at least five more A-7's lying aft of island on Starboard side. Any other aircraft are either over the side or blown to fairly small pieces. Engines are lying at random around after deck among fire crews.

~~1000~~

1040 - I count 25 intact ^{ed} aircraft forward. Any damage would be from flying debris to these aircraft. Two Air Force helos loading casualties on bow, one hovering on port quarter awaiting landing space. Six holes in flight deck, visible, all on port quarter - three very large. Wind across deck 37 knots for helos to operate.

1050 - Navy helo lifted from bow with casualties. Still pouring water into holes in deck aft. Two more Air Force helos on the bow loading. Blankets being used to patch holes in fire hoses. Seven tow tractors visible aft, five appear to be destroyed. Drivers attempted to man these tractors from the start I saw several drivers get blasted off the seat and some are probably dead. Time and again attempts were made to start tractors and pull aircraft clear but bomb blasts were so frequent that nobody could stay on tractors. ~~After~~ I saw none ^{ABANDON TRACTORS} ~~voluntarily~~. Every driver was blown from his machine. A-7 aircraft no 310 was being towed clear and just about made it when blast ^{blew} ~~blew~~ driver off tractor and blew port wing from aircraft. He lay on deck apparently dead for approximately 15 minutes as shipmates had to continue in ~~their~~ efforts to fight.

1110- Most pry-fly effort still directed toward helo evacuation. Hose teams still cooling stern area of flight deck. Sight seers ~~are~~ beginning to appear from below decks.

As men perform^{ed} in the last three hours one wonders what they could accomplish if we paid them a decent wage. Looking aft you can still see the spots you will never forget where kids died for no reason except the job was there. Large pool of blood still prominent^a beam of island on port side where tractor driver laid for so long. Most other evidence of bodies either burned or washed away now. Green die markers from survival vests have been deployed in several places aft and show bright green blotches on deck.

1130 - Hose teams are breaking into clean-up crews and piling debris on deck and throwing it over the side.

Thinking^{back} on first part of the fire, the destroyer skippers showed great courage in ship-handling in bring^g their ships along side the fan-tail. They were so close aboard that only the super-structure was visible from pry-fly, at times. All three ships were pitching moderately at the time. Smoke and flames billowed out over their bows as their crews attempted to get water on our flight deck. They exposed themselves to extreme danger from exploding bombs with apparent disregard for ~~their~~^{their} own safety. If at first their efforts were not effective due to low water pressure there was^a no question about their resolve or intent.

1145 - Ships position from Honolulu, TACAN, reported 200°/58 NM. Three Marine helos loading casualties on bow.

Captain LEE announced losses estimated at 13 dead, 78 wounded and unknown missing. 15 aircraft destroyed, ship headed for Pearl Harbor. I just noticed a snake eye fin lodged in T-shaped antenna approximated 15 feet above the 011 level and^a cut in metal shielding over locker^{in that area.}

1215 - Efforts to clear after-flight deck area continued. Debris is being pushed and shoveled over the side and we are beginning to look like a Navy ship again. Crews on A-7 #310 robbing parts as fast as they can be removed and carried below ^{for SPARE'S.} Crew on Vigilante 604 forward washing salt water off.

1230 - Air force helo loading on bow. Man over ^{board} port side reported. Helo BENZINE 22 lifted immediately to search. BAINBRIDGE moving from bow to search area with all hands apparently on deck. All efforts now on coordinating search and evacuating patients. Attempts being made to muster all hands throughout the ship.

1305 - Plat was played back ~~by~~. EOD teams trying to pick up small pieces of high explosives adrift on deck. All hands ordered to stand fast till deck cleared by EOD. Still nothing on man over-board.

1332 - CINCPACFLT on board conducting preliminary survey of damage. I went ^{below} ~~below~~. Men are gathered in groups on all decks between pri-fly and hangar deck. All seem to be speculating who in their division was killed. Some are clean and jovial about amusing things that happened to them, others are blood stained and in obvious shock over what they have seen and ~~experienced~~ done. COMMENTS BY SAILORS: "I just ran from my space into the cat-walk and a sailor fell into cat-walk with his arm blown off."

"I walked by and two guys were stuffing his guts back in before they could lift him."

"I wonder if they will let us go on liberty tonight."

1415 - CAG trying his best to get fresh water wash down on remaining aircraft. First fresh water on flight deck appearing at this time. Men can be seen lying on flight deck, exhausted. Assistant air boss coordinating efforts of helos from pri-fly and trying to keep sight seekers from flight deck.

Work load in pri-fly has been overwhelming but all situations were met and handled calmly BY SEEMINGLY UNFLAPPABLE AIR BOSS AND ASSISTANT AIR BOSS IN WELL COORDINATED EFFORTS.

Hundreds of decisions have been made on information observed, and received from damage control, mickey mouse people on flight deck, and other stations.

These decisions were made promptly and contributed beyond comprehension in limiting damage and injury. Communications in primary were excellent throughout. Enlisted crew in primary was calm and efficient in handling communications and directing air traffic around ship. There were unnecessary calls to primary but they were held to a minimum.

1440 - Jettison procedures from flight deck again secured. One ~~200~~ ~~6~~ F-4 engine hanging from fan tail can't be moved. EOD continues efforts to locate bombs ~~and~~ reported at various places below decks. Ship heading toward Pearl Harbor. Admiral HYLAND still on flight deck. Honolulu radio reporting fire and death on ENTERPRISE.

1520 - We are now passing ~~bay~~ buoys at entrance to Pearl Harbor. Commercial cruise aircraft and ~~crude~~ boats all around. Hundreds of people line the shores at ~~XXXXXX~~ Iroquois Point to watch as we pass old battle ship piers where Pearl Harbor saw worse 28 years ago.

Most aircraft on forward end of ship have been washed with fresh water in attempt to reduce corrosive action of fog foam and salt water. Ship is in good order as she passes ~~the~~ abeam Ford Island. All is quite in pri-fly and we are left with our thoughts here.

1610 - First line ashore Pearl Harbor pier. I count 19 ambulances, and three medical busses standing by.

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